IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 13 with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 2 depicts the DNA (SEQ ID NO:3) and corresponding amino acid sequence (SEQ ID NO:4) of a representative native, unmodified NS3 protease domain.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 15 with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 3 shows the DNA (SEQ ID NO:5) and corresponding amino acid sequence (SEQ ID NO:6) of a representative modified fusion protein, with the NS3 protease domain deleted from the N-terminus and including amino acids 1-121 of Core on the C-terminus.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 45, line 20 with the following amended paragraph:

Protease enzyme activity is determined as follows. An NS4A peptide having the sequence of SEQ ID NO:8 (KKGSVVIVGRIVLSGKPAIIPKK), and the fusion protein are diluted in 90 µl of reaction buffer (25 mM Tris, pH 7.5, 0.15M NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA, 10% glycerol, 0.05 n-Dodecyl B-D-Maltoside, 5 mM DTT) and allowed to mix for 30 minutes at room temperature. 90 µl of the mixture is added to a microtiter plate (Costar, Inc., Corning, NY) and 10 µl of HCV substrate (AnaSpec, Inc., San Jose CA) is added. The plate is mixed and read on a Fluostar plate reader. Results are expressed as relative fluorescence units (RFU) per minute.